CITIES OF NEW ZEAL[AND].

A DESCRIPTION OF SOME OF ... "OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT." ...NATURAL, GRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS ...CIAL FEATURES, ARCHITECTURAL AND COM... OF THE CITIES OF THE ...UTH PACIFIC ISLANDS—A PEN-PICTURE ... HOW THAT PART OF THE WORLD APP...

WELLINGTON, N. Z., Sept. 1, 1880

In this letter I write of the New Zealand Islands of the Australasian group—islands of great importance to the commercial world.

New Zealand comprises three islands, spoken of as North, South and Stewart's Island, or, as they are most generally known, New Ulster, New Munster, and New Leinster. They were originally possessed solely by a tribe of savages and cannibals called Maoris—of whom I wrote in my last letter.

Little can be learned of the history of these savages beyond that they have been immigrants—not indigenous—and that when they arrived, there were no human beings on the island. Similarity of language, however, indicates that they came from some of the North Pacific islands, probably the Sandwich Island group.

Auckland, the largest northern city in the island, is most picturesquely situated, and its position for commercial purposes is very good. It is the port of call for the Pacific Mail Steamers and has other direct steam communication with the larger cities in Australia. Queen's Street is the principal thoroughfare, and on it are located some very fine buildings. At the foot of Queen's Street is Queen's Wharf—the largest in the colonies, I am told, being 1700 feet long, with ample facilities for the leading and discharging of vessels. The city is well lighted with gas and has a good water supply.

Few cities can boast of scenery as picturesque as that surrounding Auckland. It has a narrow isthmus, separating the seas that wash the east and west shores of the island. The landscape is dotted over with volcanic cones, mementoes of the days when subterranean fires poured forth a devastating and destructive deluge of molten matter. There is a beautiful view of the surroundings to be obtained from the summit of Mt. Eden—the blending of land and water, of hill and dale, of fertile undulating lowlands and sombre heights. Mount Eden is an extinct volcano, overhanging the city at the distance of about a mile. Having made up a party at the hotel we engaged carriages and drove to the foot of the mountain. The ascent had to be made on foot, which took about one half an hour [illegible] as there is a good footpath to the top. Looking over the lip of the crater we see below the basin where, in former days, volcanic fires boiled and seethed. It took but a few minutes to descend into the crater as far as we could go, but a hard and long climb to get up again. We procured fine specimens of lava. In one lava-rock we found imbedded a few shells, quite bleached and giving evidence of having been in a warm place.

After viewing the beautiful and grand in nature to our heart's content, we descend to our carriages and are soon bowling along over a good hard road towards Onehunga, a small but pretty village a few miles from the city. The open strips of pasture land and paddock, dotted with quiet homes and trees green with foliage even now in winter, are picturesque in appearance and striking in their serene rusticity of dress. Passing on, we come to Mungare and Otahuhu, villages of some pretentions, and back to Auckland, having in all driven some twenty miles and procured good appetites for our dinner.

The "Auckland Domain," with its gardens, pleasure and sporting grounds, is a pleasant resort on a warm day. The paths are agreeably shaded by foliage which affords a shelter to the singing birds. The green slopes with their gradual descent present a grand intermingling of the wild and beautiful in a comparatively small compass. The rich garlandry of leaves, wreathed with creeping tendrils and white and purple flowers, make a spot which the poet heart would select for a meditative walk, surrounded as it is by all that is beautiful in nature. The following lines clipped from the *New Zealand Herald*, will illustrate the beauties of this charming city much better than my prosaic description of the place.

AUCKLAND.

Beautiful art thou, Auckland, without measure,
Thou city of the sea,
Thy terraced slopes rise swelling from the wavelets
That murmur unto thee.

The sounding dirges of the stormy ocean
Approach thee not anear;
For many isles their adamantine bulwarks
For thy protection rear.

And, surging round the tri-peaked Rangitoto,
The ocean tide doth sweep;
Till, in the bosom of thy land-locked harbour,
It softly falls to sleep.

Beautiful art thou, Auckland, when the day-dawn,
Transfused with pearly light,
Reveals, through the soft haze of liquid opal,
Thy beauty to our sight.

Beautiful art thou, Auckland, when the sunset
Its glory doth unfold;
And o'er the purple ranges throws its splendour
Of crimson and of gold,

Lighting thee up with all the tints of cloudland,
In rich and mellow glow;
While myraid casements, in the molten glory,
Like myraid sunlets show.

The first bright kisses of the morning greet thee,
And silver-top each hill.
The midday sun shines through thy leafy coverts,
And sparkles on each rill.

The evening sun folds thee in mellow glory
Of ruddy, golden light,
And fondly gazeth on thee long, 'ere sinketh
O'er thee the shades of night.

And then, fair Luna flings her silver radiance
Upon each rounded hill;
And from the realms of Elfland thou seem'st starting
So silver bright and still.

* * * * *

Beautiful Auckland! The sojourner leaveth
Thy shores with fond regret;
While those who daily see thy changing beauty,
Think thou art peerless yet.

Yes, thou art peerless; spreading in thy beauty
On Waitemata's breast,
Like some rich jewel, set within the wreathings
Of Nature's diadem.

Thy smiling cottages and mansions cluster
Along the sunny shore;
And Art and Nature, hand in hand, have crown'd thee
A queen for evermore.

Our stay at Auckland having come to an end we took passage on steamer "Rotorua" for Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, the steamer calling at several ports on the way. At our first port of call, Gisborne, we arrived about noon. This is a small place of some importance and is located at the head of Poverty Bay—so called by Capt. Cook, the explorer who first set foot on the island at this point, and could not make arrangements with the natives for provisions. The circumstances of his landing were unfortunate. "We landed," he says, "abreast of the ship, on the east side of the bay, but seeing some natives on the west side with whom I wished to speak, I ordered the yawl to carry us over.

"When we came near the place where the people were assembled they all ran away. However we landed. Leaving our yawl in charge of some boys, we went some two or three hundred yards from the waterside, when we saw four men armed with long lances rushing up to attack those left in charge of the yawl. We fired a musket over their heads. At this they stopped and looked around, but in a few minutes resumed the pursuit, brandishing their lances in a threatening manner. A second shot was fired over their heads of which they took no notice, but one of them lifting up his spear to dart it at the yawl, another piece was fired, which shot him dead. The others stood as if petrified with astonishment. As soon as they recovered they fled away."

The account which the natives give of their impressions of Cook's arrival is recorded. They took the ship at first for a gigantic bird, and were struck with the beauty and size of its wings, as they supposed the sails to be. But on seeing a smaller bird, unfledged, descending into the water, and a number of parti-colored beings, apparently in human shape, the bird was regarded as a houseful of divinities. The sudden death of their chief (for such it proved to be) was regarded as a thunderstroke of these new gods. To revenge themselves was their dearest wish, but how to accomplish it with divinities who could kill them at a distance was difficult to determine."

It is little to be wondered at that after the unfortunate occurrence related above further intercourse with the natives at this point should become impossible. So on the 11th of October, 1769, Cook weighed anchor and left "this inhospitable place," as he called it, and on which he bestowed the name of "Poverty Bay," as it did not afford a single article they wanted except a little fire-wood. The name does not signify, however, as some of the best tillable lands in the north island are found about this place. The scenery is bold and mountainous, snow-capped peaks being visible in the distance. The place affords no harbor for vessels. Our steamer lay out in the bay and passengers and freight were landed in small boats.

After tarrying a few hours we steam away for Napeir and arrive at daybreak the next day. The harbor is poor and all that makes the town of importance is that it is a feeder to the back country. The government of New Zealand have a railroad here extending back into and opening some sixty square miles of country. I am told it does not pay the interest on the cost of its locomotives. The town is a pretty little place, built at the foot of a high promontory that extends some distance into the bay. It has some 10,000 inhabitants and the largest hotel in the country, being something of a watering place for summer visitors. In near proximity to the town is a low, flat, rich plain of miles upon miles in extent which terminates at the foot of the Ruahine range of mountains. The tops of these mountains are perpetually covered with snow and present to the traveler a beautiful sight as the rising sun is first seen tinting them with its golden rays.

The next day we arrive at Wellington where we are to spend a few days before taking up our journey again.

The city of Wellington is built on the shores of Lambton Harbor. There are several well constructed quays and piers stretching along the shore, and at one of these vessels of 2,000 tons register can discharge and load with safety. Although the majority of the buildings are of wood, there are some really fine warehouses and edifices on the principal thoroughfares. Steam tram-cars run through the main streets and for the fare of threepence (six cents) the traveler or business man is conveyed the distance of about two miles.

As Wellington is the capital of the Colonial Government the chief public buildings are erected here. That known as the "Government offices" is said to be the largest wooden edifice in the world. Though by no means an architectural ornament to the city, it is an imposing structure. Government House, the residence of the Governor of the colony, is a handsome building, surrounded by fine, well kept grounds, and the Houses of Parliament are well worthy of inspection. The Governor's house is built where no good view of the city and bay can be had—a great mistake, as the city proper is built upon a side hill and beautifully terraced. The front door of the house at which I am stoping looks down upon the roof of the one on the terrace below it. From the upper terrace a grand view is had of the whole city and bay and beyond to the lofty hills of Mount Tararua.

During my visit Parliament was in session and I was favored with a ticket of admission to the floor of the House. The room in which the House holds its sessions is nearly square, with galleries on all sides, one gallery only being open to the public, the balance for the press, the ladies, and diplomatic attendants. The light is from some hundred or more gas jets secreted in the dome and giving a very mellow and fine light. For size and decorations the room will not compare with some of our State Legislative Halls at home.

In the House of Lords are men who through the influence of large sums of money and their immense wealth have life appointments, who are no more fitted for the position of trust and responsibility imposed upon them than many a school-boy of a dozen summers. One man especially was pointed out to me, who, possessed of untold wealth, had received the appointment to the House of Lords. He was never known to make a speech, offer a resolution or do anything but vote; and the look upon his face was truly idiotic. I heard quite a number of members try to say something but during all the time I spent in the House I did not hear one good speech or a particle of good common sense—nothing but jobbery and selfish disposition of public funds to further their own or their constituents' interests. Just here a few figures may be of interest to show how badly governed a small but truly wealthy country in its natural recources, may be:

Inhabitants, 500,000, public debt, £25,000,000, or about $125,000,000; number of government officials under salaries, 10,000, or 1 to every 50 of the inhabitants, men women and children; government salaries, £2,500,000; subsidies, grants, etc., £1,500,000; interest on debt, £1,300,000.

The Colonial Museum is a fine building and contains a fine collection of exhibits, the most noteworthy being a wonderfully carved Maori house and part of the skeleton of the "moa," an extinct species of bird, of enormous proportions, standing, when alive over 12 feet high. In the Canterbury museum, I am told, a complete skeleton is on exhibition.

Having spent a very pleasant week visiting with friends and seeing the sights of the city we are loth to say good by and we cherish the hope of some day being able to pay another visit to this place. Under these circumstances we may exclaim as the steamer moves away from the shore, "Farewell, but not for ever."

L. E. PAGE.

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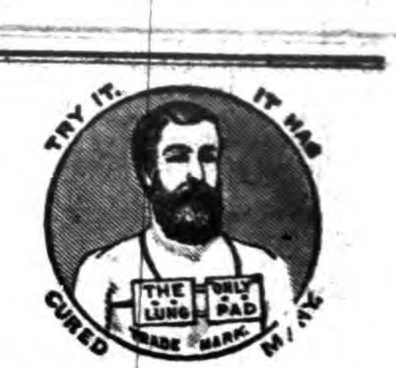

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